

Calisthenics Exercises using Benches

Squats

Split squats with front or back foot on the bench

One leg squats with working leg standing on the bench and the other on the floor

Self assisted two leg squats or pistol squats

Jumbo shrimp squats

Partial ROM (range of motion) squats - back facing bench - sit down to bench and stand up (using one leg or two)

Posterior chain

Partner or solo prone hyperextensions on the bench

Cross-bench Superman

Angled bridge

Bridge curls (one foot or two)

Abdominals

Knee tucks, flat or sitting

Leg raise variations, including scissors

Bent leg hold - between two benches or using a pair of pushup handles or parallettes on one bench

L-sit progression - same as above

Pushing movements

Incline and decline pushups - on palms, knuckles, wrists, or fingers. If you're working wrist or finger pushups, you can have both hands touching the ground in the same way (such as on the back of the hand or on the fingertips), or in mixed positions, to make it easier (one hand on the palm, the other on the back of the hand or fingertips). Also, one can use one hand, both hands, or a transitional movement (such as archer pushups, uneven pushups. or self assisted one arm pushups).

Jowett pushups - can be done with feet on bench and hands on chairs or benches. This exercise allows for a much deeper range of motion and provides a good stretch under tension for the pectorals and deltoids, as the chest will go between the chairs or benches. This is a brutal exercise, but it's also a wonderful chest builder.

Elevated pike handstand pushups

Bench dip variations

Bodyweight extensions - one or two hands; standing or kneeling

Tiger bend pushups - incline, decline, or elevated pike position

Holds

Planks - incline or decline; bent arm or straight arm; one leg or both legs; gecko plank (one arm up and opposite leg up)

Elbow lever - decline or raised. These are both easier than practicing a full elbow lever, in which you are supporting your entire body weight on your hands.

Dragon flag progression

Don't start this progression until you've accumulated a high degree of proficiency with leg raises and hip thrusts. Be sure to get some formal instruction on this exercise, as it is highly technical.

1. Dragon flag negatives. Lie flat on the bench, reach back with your hands, and grip the end of the bench. The shoulders will act as the fulcrum point for "leveraging" the body upwards. Kick up or leg raise and thrust into the top position then lower as slowly as you can into the bottom position. The top position will look very similar to the candlestick position in gymnastics. The goal is to lower under control until your feet are an angle of about 30 to 45 degrees to your bench. This will be the bottom position. As your form improves, add range of motion until you can nearly touch the bench with your legs while using control.

When you come out of the hold, land softly under control. If you're having a hard time controlling the movement, have a spotter help you on the way down and cue you to keep your hips locked during the negative (the lowering phase). Throughout the entire negative, you will need to maintain full body tension, control your breathing, and keep your hands, shoulders, and hips locked in. Gradually build up your repetitions. This exercise could be done at the end of a workout, especially on days that you're heavily training abdominals.

Once you have built up reps, gradually tighten up form. Once you feel comfortable, practice holding the bottom position for time, and build up to at least a ten second hold.

2. Dragon flag tucks. Lock in your hands and shoulders, tuck your feet in close to your hips, then slightly bridge up by pushing through the feet. You will need to get your hips straight and locked in. Take a deep breath and squeeze the abs tight while maintaining the tension in the arms, shoulders, hips, and glutes. Start raising your knees up while keeping the hips locked in straight and squeezing hard with the arms and abs. At the top position, straighten the knees. Lower under control and hold the bottom position for a few seconds, then bend your knees and place your feet back on the bench, and repeat the exercise for reps. Once you've built up your reps in this exercise, tighten up form.

3. Dragon flag - fully locked. Your knees will be locked out straight throughout the entire movement. Start with very low reps, but very high concentration and intensity. Again, ask a spotter to help if needed while you're building your strength in this movement. As you improve, add a rep here and there. Continue tightening up form. As you improve, start making each rep longer and more intense.